

Abstract of the Disclosure

A networked image processing environment has several image data processing systems (501 - 508). In addition, there are provided many storage systems (511 - 518) in which each of the data storage systems is operated under the direct control of one of the image processing systems. A fibre channel switch (521) is connected to each of the data processing systems and to each of the storage systems. A low bandwidth Ethernet (551) connects the image processing systems together and is also connected to the fibre channel switch. Under this arrangement, the fibre channel switch is controlled by one of the processing systems. A first processing system requests access to a data storage system controlled by a second processing system over the Ethernet. The second processing system makes an identification of storage regions that may be accessed by the first processing system then conveys this identification to the first processing system, again over the Ethernet. Having received this information, the first processing system accesses the identified storage portion but this time via the high bandwidth switching means. This provides a stable environment which allows host processors to gain access at full bandwidth to storage systems controlled by other hosts processors.

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